AMERICA'S EARLY SERIAL KILLERS

Five Cases of Frontier Madness

MIKE RILEY

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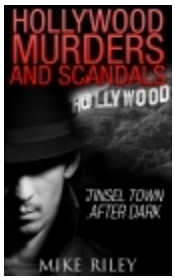
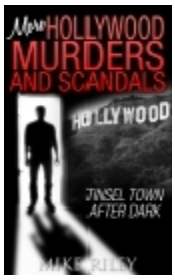


Hollywood Murders and Scandals: Tinsel Town After Dark
“In the late afternoon, her friends recalled, Monroe began to act strangely seeming to be heavily under the influence. She made statements to friend Peter Lawford that he should tell the President goodbye and tell himself goodbye.”
Check it out HERE



More Hollywood Murders and Scandals: Tinsel Town After Dark
“At some point in the night Reeves and Lemmon began to argue. As Reeves headed upstairs to his bedroom, Lemmon would later tell officers that she shouted out that he would probably shoot himself.”
Check it out HERE

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Dear Readers

Introduction

Without a doubt the early days of the settlement of the United States were a difficult and dangerous time. The first settlers were faced with inclement weather, illness, the back- breaking work of farming new land, dangerous animals and sometimes hostile native peoples. We tend to think of those early settlers as hard working, decent people only looking for religious freedom and better opportunities for their families. However, even during those times, people existed who were depraved, evil and mentally ill. These are some of their stories.

In the modern sense of the word, the first documented serial killer in America was H.H. Holmes, who took many of his victims from the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Some of the cases listed here occurred prior to Holmes' activities and due to the shear numbers of victims, can certainly be considered serial killings.

Bear in mind that record keeping back then was spotty at best. Every effort has been made to research and verify the information contained here. In some cases, conflicting information exists and in others, the information is just not available. Other authors may come to different conclusions. Please keep that in mind as you enjoy this book.

The Harpe Brothers: Pure Evil In Early America

Killers' Names: Micajah (pronounced Mickey) and Wiley Harpe
Dates Active: 1790's
Locations: Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois and Mississippi
Victims: Up to forty

Backstory:
Micajah 'Big' Harpe (born 1768) and Wiley 'Little' Harpe (born 1770) were brothers (though some report they were actually cousins). They were also killers, highway robbers and pirates, operating across Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois and Mississippi during the late 1700's. The Harpe brothers may have the notorious title of being America's first serial killers. Their crimes were motivated by nothing more than greed and bloodlust, killing for fun.

Little is known about the Harpe's early lives. They reportedly emigrated from Scotland to the USA as young children. Other sources suggest they were born in America, and it was their fathers who had emigrated. Here is the first suggestion that they were actually cousins, their fathers being brothers. Micajah and Wiley were not the names they were given at birth. In fact, they were originally known as William and Joshua.

Back in the 1700's, Tennessee was not the place it is today. Adventurers, boatmen and traders were among the people living there or just passing through. The area was full of thick forests. The main road at the time was the Chickasaw Trace, at first a narrow trail used by deer and Native Americans, that grew wider as it was used by more people. It became an area rife with robberies and highwaymen.

During their early lives, the Harpe families ran plantations, until the colonies erupted in the Revolutionary War. At some point during this time, they changed their names. William became Micajah (pronounced Mickey) and Joshua, Wiley. It was also here that they first posed as brothers. They joined the war, but on the side of Britain. Given that they were born only 7

and 5 years before the start of the Revolutionary War and would have been only 15 and 13 years old at the end of the War, their supposed involvement in it is somewhat suspect.

Micajah was a big man with a fierce look. He was usually covered in dirt, but you could still identify him as a redhead. He liked weapons, and frequently armed himself with more than one. Wiley meanwhile, while also very adept with weapons, was not as large or threatening.

It is rumored that they were once arrested and jailed for a crime they did not commit. We may never know whether their actions were for revenge. What we do know is that the brutality of their actions was something never before seen in the young country.

Circumstances:
As the war was coming to an end, and things were looking bad for the British, the Harpes decided that military life wasn't for them and so they deserted. When the war was won by the colonies, both men had little left to lose, and so they became outlaws, starting to ride with gangs, pushing west as they stole and plundered.

As they travelled, Micajah kidnapped a woman named Maria Davidson to be his wife, and then also kidnapped Susan Wood as well, while Wiley ended up legally marrying a woman named Sarah Rice. All of the women were abused to the point they were likely too scared to try to escape. Indeed, at one point later when they had a chance to escape, they voluntarily returned, though they would later report they had been too scared not to.

The next confirmed sighting of the pair was in Knox County somewhere between 1795 and 1797. By then, they had already murdered five people, including four of their own children. It was said Micajah in particular could not stand the sound of children crying so he killed them.

Eventually, the odd family settled into a cabin in Tennessee, on what would eventually be called Old Maidensville Road. They made an effort to grow

crops for food, and got to know the other local residents. Even then, they had a dark side. There were rumors in the community that they had killed a man who had shown concern for the welfare of the women living with the Harpes.

It wasn't long before they once again wanted to move on, and the pair started stealing livestock from their neighbors. The stolen cattle were slaughtered and sold to raise funds. At first, they remained undetected, but over time the men buying the meat became suspicious. One of the men, who himself was missing horses, went to the Harpe property, and when no one was found at home, searched the land with several other men and found his horses tied up in the woods. Following the trail, they also found the Harpes. Both Micajah and Wiley were arrested, and brought into town, but before long the pair managed to escape. Now, they were truly on the run.

Over time, the Harpes became known as two of the most feared outlaws of the time. They lived for a time in a large natural limestone foundation located in Illinois. It had passages underground that were so large you could hide herds of livestock in them, and the pair considered them an excellent hiding spot.

During this time, they also briefly traveled with a group of river pirates, who had been terrorizing the Ohio River for decades. Because of the location of their rocky hiding place, they could easily ambush people traveling on the river. They also acted as guides to help the other pirates entrap people. While the rest of the pirate group were thieves, they didn't set out to physically harm their victims. This changed when the Harpes joined in. Once, after removing the clothing of one man, and then tying him to a horse, they sent both of them over a cliff. After that incident, the rest of the river pirates severed ties with the pair.

The Harpes were on their own once again, and in 1798 records show they were in Kentucky. Here, they began a campaign of intense violence. Simply to send a message to residents, they killed a little girl by smashing in her head. They also murdered a boy on his way to a mill, and a man they

suspected of naming them as the people who stole the horses in Tennessee. As well as shooting him, they also mutilated his body.

Often, the whole family would travel along with someone randomly encountered along the road. They would suggest they ride together for protection, and then drop back and kill their companion themselves.

Whenever people pointed the finger at them, or tried to arrest them, those people were murdered themselves. They continued to kill people with abandon for simply crossing their path, showing no mercy, even to children. There was no distinction in their victims; anyone they met was fair game. At this time, Micajah also killed his own daughter when she was only four months old, by smashing her head into a tree.

After a time, a reward was offered for their capture to the tune of $300 (a substantial amount of money back then). This caused them to withdraw and hide in the Cumberland Mountains, bordering Kentucky and Tennessee. As they travelled, they continued to break into settlements and murder the inhabitants, also killing anyone they came across in their travels who had money or goods they desired.

On one of their stops, they refused to pay a bill for food and a man intervened, telling them that he would pay the bill if they did not have any money. The Harpes pretended to apologize and then suggested they ride together. Once they had left the town, they killed the man and stole his money, leaving his body to decay on the side of the road. That victim was found and identified. Knowing he had last associated with the Harpes, a posse soon gathered in pursuit of the family.

The group captured both Micajah and Wiley, and this time they could not escape so easily. They were locked in prison awaiting trial. However, eventually they did manage to escape and disappeared once again. Their wives were all still in prison, and at the time all of them were pregnant. Once they gave birth and were freed, they went back to their hiding place in the cave to meet their husbands.

If it had not already been enough, from here the Harpes' bloodshed only increased. At the time, there was not even an organized police force, and the land was sparsely populated, allowing for plenty of opportunity to attack and kill without being discovered. The Harpes started in Kentucky, but soon began moving back through the Cumberland Mountains into Tennessee. After the discovery of yet another of their victims, the public was determined to stop them once and for all.

With public outcry mounting, the Harpes disappeared back into the mountains to hide for a time, but would occasionally venture down to a home they thought was safe. This was the beginning of the end.

Late in August 1799, the Harpes visited a homestead run by Moses Stegall, a man of suspect character who had associated with them in the past. What exactly happened is not clear, as some sources report the facts differently, but the Harpes visited the homestead when Moses Stegall was away, and asked his wife to make them a meal. Some accounts say that they also asked to stay the night. She answered that she was tending to her infant, four months old at the time, and so they would have to wait to be fed. The Harpes suggested that she place the baby in a cradle, and they would watch over it while she cooked.

Mrs. Stegall agreed, and was pleased that the infant was so well behaved in her absence. After she served the men, she checked on the baby and discovered the reason why she had not heard a cry. The Harpes had killed the child to keep it quiet. The Harpes then murdered Mrs. Stegall with the same knife, stole her money, set fire to the house, and then ran.

A laborer named Williams, who had been working in the fields, witnessed the incident, and gathered up the women he was working with to protect them, alerting others in the area of the incident. Moses Stegall soon heard of his murdered wife and child, and gathered men to go in pursuit of the family.

They spotted smoke coming from a nearby cavern, and assumed the Harpes were inside. Creeping up, they surprised the pair and managed to shoot

Micajah and wound him. He was, however, able to escape on a horse, leaving his wives behind. Wiley also escaped. There were not enough men to follow both of the Harpes, and so they decided to pursue Micajah, while a few others stayed behind to guard the women.

Eventually, Harpe's horse ran out of steam, and the pursuers caught up, lead by Captain John Leiper. For reasons unknown, Leiper was able to travel faster than the rest of the group, and caught up to Harpe alone. Concerned about approaching a man of Harpe's size and reputation alone, he approached cautiously. He armed himself, ready to shoot.

At this time, he realized that Harpe was not shooting at him as he approached. For whatever reason, Harpe's gun was not working, and so he was unable to shoot back. Leiper fired his gun, and Harpe was shot, falling to the ground. He was a big man and a good fighter, and was still equipped with a knife, and so his pursuer still considered him dangerous. Leiper approached him slowly and warned him not to move, or he would be shot again. Slowly, Harpe was coaxed into surrendering, and was soon subdued.

When Micajah was asked why he killed so many people, he simply answered that he and his brother had grown disgusted with mankind and had agreed to "destroy as many persons as they could." From all who he had killed, the only murder he admitted to feeling remorse over was the death of his own child, killed because the crying annoyed him.

Leiper continued to question him until he was satisfied that Harpe had revealed all, including some murders that no one had ever suspected them of committing. By then, the rest of the men caught up and had little interest in what Harpe had to say, they wanted revenge. One cut into his neck with Harpe's own knife. It's not clear whether he was beheaded first, or was shot and died before his head was removed. Whatever happened, finally Micajah Harpe had met his match. He had killed up to forty people, and he was only thirty-one years old.

The men left Harpe's body, taking only his head, and returned to where the women had been left. Some reports state that there were also three children

present. They were taken to court and interrogated about their role in the family and the killings. All claimed they had not known about the Harpe men's true characters until it was too late, and then they were afraid for the own lives, should they try and leave. They painted the two men as cold blooded killers, even wanting to kill their remaining three children when fleeing after killing the Stegall's, simply so they could escape without hindrances.

It was decided that the women could not have stood up to the two men, and therefore were not responsible for their actions. They were set free to make their own way in the world, though you have to wonder how much of a life they could have had, having seen their own children murdered and living in fear all their lives. Eventually, both Maria and Susan remarried and settled with their new families. Sarah remained single, though she had her daughter.

Micajah Harpe's head was put on public display, and it was left there for many years, until it was simply a skull. The road it was displayed upon was eventually named Harpe's Head Road. Captain Leiper was given $250 reward. For a time, Wiley Harpe remained on the run.

Wiley Harpe heard what happened to his cousin, and decided to lay low. He moved to Mississippi, and changed his name. Old habits die hard though, and reports say that he continued to murder people, including seducing and then murdering young women. He joined an existing gang that already had a price on their own heads, planning to capture the existing leader and collect the reward money for himself. Finally, the time was right and he killed the man, removed his head, and packed the head for transport.

However, claiming the reward had its own risks, but Harpe was too arrogant to realize the position he'd be putting himself in. Another man, Sam Mays, who had helped with the killing, accompanied him. However, the pair was detained on suspicion of stealing horses. At the same time, troops arriving from Tennessee for another purpose recognized Harpe and both men were captured and imprisoned. They escaped, but were recaptured again and on

February 8, 1804, both Harpe and Mays were hanged. Their heads were also placed on spikes as a warning to other outlaws.

Conclusion:
Micajah and Wiley Harpe killed indiscriminately and their methods were brutal and merciless even to the point of killing their own children. Serial killers, or not?

Felipe Espinosa: A Rampage of Revenge

Killer's Name: Felipe Espinosa
Date Active: 1863
Location: Colorado Territory
Victims: May be up to sixty

Backstory:

Felipe Nerio Espinosa was born in 1836, and by the time of his death, it was known that he had killed at least two dozen people and possibly many more.

We cannot be certain where Espinosa was born. Some sources report that he was born in Vera Cruz, Mexico. It's more likely however that his place of birth was Rio Arriba County, in New Mexico Territory. His father, Pedro Ignacio Espinosa was also born in New Mexico, at Abiquú. His mother was named Gertrudis Chavez.

A Mexican census in 1845 lists a number of his family living there, and an 1860 US Census records a Felipe Nerio Espinosa in the San Fernando Valley, New Mexico. He was recorded as living there with his wife, along with the couple's two children.

During that time, most of the residents of the area were Spanish-American settlers. Like many residents, Espinosa was extremely religious. The migration into New Mexico of many Baptists and Presbyterians in the mid 1880's was disliked by many of the Hispanic residents. Like Espinosa, they thought that the migration was a dangerous threat to the country's Catholicism.

Espinosa, along with other members of his family, belonged to a religious group called the Pentitente Brotherhood. The group believed in self-flagellation as a way of removing sin. Partly because of these extreme views, in the late 1800's both the church and the state government banned the group.

The oldest of several children, Espinosa was reported as being violent and mentally unstable. However, he lived a relatively normal life for some time before his murderous side showed its self. He was around forty-two years old when he began his rampage.

Circumstances:

The year 1863 was a hard time in the history of America. The country was at war, with both attentions and resources looking eastward, where a number of strong Confederate victories had many assured of winning the war against the Union. In the west, Texan rebels had invaded New Mexico. At the same time, settlers in the area were also waging war against the Native population in the Great Plains war.

During this time, both travelers and residents of the Colorado Territory lived in daily fear for their lives, but that fear had nothing to do with the wars. Vicious murders had been reported, where people riding on their own suddenly disappeared, their bodies found hidden in the brush, or dumped in a gulley. There were never any surviving witnesses, and no clues to suggest the identity of the murderers were ever left behind. Lookouts were appointed throughout the region, but were ineffective as they had no idea who they were looking out for. Were the murders being committed by Indian Natives, a bloodthirsty gang, or a lone killer?

Violence wasn't unusual for the area, but no one had ever seen brutality like this. The first victim was discovered in May of 1863. Not only had he been killed, but his body had also been mutilated, his heart hacked out of his chest. Over that summer, twenty-five more were murdered, the style and brutality of the killings linking them all to the first attack.

However, there were differences. Sometimes the weapons were long range, others handheld, and nothing jumped out to point the finger at any one group or person. Soon, many more would be dead, and no one would be safe from suspicion, or indeed from becoming the next victim.

Investigation:
While it is important to note that the following event may not be factual, it was widely reported that Espinosa was not motivated by murder alone. When he lived in Vera Cruz as a young boy, reports state that he witnessed a family tragedy. During the Mexican-American War his hometown was bombarded by American warships in the harbor. One of the shell blasts is said to have killed six members of the Espinosa family instantly.

His only remaining family lived in Colorado, and so Espinosa was sent to live in the USA. Here, he and his younger brother, Jose Vivian, became bandits. Tension in the area was high, with many Hispanic citizens suddenly finding themselves living in America after the Mexican-American war. Laws were made to ensure they were not disadvantaged, but like many treaties in the country's history, things did not turn out as hoped. The situation was exacerbated in 1861, when the creation of the Colorado Territory found many cut off from New Mexico.

When he and his brother robbed a wagon on the road to Fairplay, Colorado, Espinosa decided to have a little fun. The brothers tied the driver underneath the wagon, his head barely above the rocky ground. They then whipped the horses into a frenzy, making them take off running uncontrollably. The driver was pulled like this for miles, and by the time the wagon was finally stopped, he was very nearly dead. However, the driver did survive and was able to describe his attackers. It seems he had been their neighbor once before. The perpetrators were named – Felipe Espinosa, and his brother Jose Vivian.

A bounty was placed on Espinosa's head, and it would not be the last. The mission to capture Felipe and Jose Vivian was given to the only law enforcement in the area, the newly built Fort Garland. A man named Lieutenant Hutt took charge, assisted by a U.S. Marshal named Austin.

Deciding it was a bad idea to approach the brothers without knowing what they'd find, it was decided that Lt. Hutt would approach their farmhouse with just a couple of soldiers, pretending to be recruiting. This was not an uncommon practice in the area due to the Indian War and the lack of soldiers currently in the territory. Marshal Austin was keeping watch on a nearby hill. The plan was to separate the brothers from the rest of the family, and then arrest them.

As Hutt approached the house, Jose Vivian Espinosa stepped out of the house. He was unarmed, and did not seem to suspect them. Hutt explained why he was there, and Espinosa surprised them by asking a great deal of questions. Finally, after a long time he declined to be recruited, and Hutt, by then frustrated, grabbed his arm and attempted to arrest him. It was then that a gunshot flew from the house, hitting Hutt. It turned out that Felipe Espinosa had sent out his brother as bait, and kept a rifle trained on them at all times. Now, within seconds, the yard was a hailstorm of bullets.

Soldiers surrounded the building, and the brothers made a break for it out the back of the property, still shooting as the soldiers surrounded the perimeter. Their shots killed one of the soldiers. Marshal Austin took chase on a horse, but before he could catch up, his horse tripped and fell, crushing him beneath. He survived, but would never fully recover.

Meanwhile, the Espinosa brothers were gone. They were now on the run, and there was no turning back.

It's during this time that it's reported Felipe Espinosa was visited by the divine. A deeply religious man, one night, Espinosa claimed to have been visited in his dreams by a vision of the Virgin Mary,

telling him it was his duty to avenge the death of his family by the USA. The method of revenge? Espinosa should kill one hundred *gringos* (white Americans) for every member of his family who had been killed by America, 600 in all. Do we believe this account of Espinosa's devotion? There are various accounts on the subject of Espinosa's motivations.

Some say that America's overtaking of what was Mexican territory caused his family to become displaced, and their property and land taken over by white settlers. Others blame his actions on a vendetta from an 1847 revolt, where Americans hung the suspected Mexican leaders. Yet others report that Americans had raped Espinosa's sister, after he had given them food and shelter. Whatever the reason, it's clear that Espinosa had a deep hatred for Anglo Americans, and targeted them with his brutal crimes.

At some point, Espinosa sent a letter to the Territorial Governor John Evans, telling him of his mission. He also demanded pardons for himself and his followers, a large allotment of land to be given to them in Conejos County, and an appointment in the Colorado Volunteers. He threatened to kill yet more if these demands were not met.

The next victim of Espinosa was a man called Jim Harkins, an affectionate man well liked in the region of a county near Canyon City, Colorado, now known as Fremont County. He was found dead, shot through the forehead, and then his head split open with an ax. His brains lay on the floor. He had also been stabbed twice.

At first, local Indians were suspected, but that idea was questioned when another body was found the very next day. Just a couple of miles away from the first crime scene, the body of William Bruce was found hacked to pieces outside his home. A crucifix made from sticks was protruding from his forehead.

The victims continue to appear, seemingly killed at random. Most were secluded and killed when alone, likely when no cry for help could be heard. Eventually, the brothers arrived at the mining settlement South Park. Here, they found men who worked high in the mountains all alone, away from civilization; the perfect victims. It's reported that the brothers would sometimes watch their target for hours, before finally striking.

Businessmen from Denver were found dead outside a popular hotel, shot at long range. Bodies of local residents were also found, sometimes hacked at and mutilated to the point they were no longer recognizable.

By now, paranoia was ripe across the entire territory. No one was safe, and everyone was a suspect. An innocent man who was new to the region was almost lynched for the crimes, the crowd being subdued and the man freed at the last moment.

By then, Governor Evans had increased the bounty on Espinosa's head, and also appointed a small group of infantry to search the region. When the brother of a prominent lieutenant, George L. Shoup, was also found dead and mutilated, Shoup himself doubled the reward.

Just as every member of the region was becoming terrified for their lives, the tables turned. A lumberjack by the name of Matthew Metcalfe was driving a team of horses through the California Gulch in South Park, pulling an open wagon filled with lumber. He saw the Espinosas standing behind him. They said nothing, simply opened fire. He was hit and thrown backwards into the wagon. Spooked, the horses took off, carrying the wagon and Metcalfe away to safety.

Espinosa's diary would later be found to report that he 'killed a man in a wagon'. He was wrong. Inside his pocket, Metcalfe carried a booklet of a condensed version of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. It slowed the bullet, and he survived. He lived to tell his tale, and the killer was given a face.

A posse was formed quickly, with a man named John McCannon in charge. The ground was soft from recent melting snow, and a fresh trail of hoof prints was found. They followed it, only to find another victim, mutilated to the point he was only recognizable by his brother, who was unfortunately a member of the posse. He was escorted back into town after becoming inconsolable, and the rest continued on.

The posse rode through the night, pushing exhausted horses and equally exhausted men further onwards. Just after sunrise, they stopped on a ridge and spotted two horses tied up in a meadow below them. A campfire had been set and smoke was wafting through the air, but not a soul could be seen. They were either going to surprise the killers, or walk directly into a trap.

The group split, and approached from both sides. Moving into position, they drew their guns and waited. Finally, a man approached and started to untie the horses. He was whistling and seemed completely unbothered by anything. Finally, a member of the posse could no longer stand it, and fired at the man. The man responded by crying out and falling over, but also pulled out a gun and

started firing back. The posse shot back again, but only succeeded in felling the horse. Finally, a man named Fred Carter took a shot and sent a bullet through Jose Vivian Espinosa's brain.

With all this activity going on, a second figure ran through from the trees. McCannon yelled out to hold fire, the man was identified as Billy Youngh, a member of the posse sent to approach from the other direction. In fact, the man was someone else entirely, wearing a suit bought at the same shop that Youngh shopped at. This man however, had acquired the suit not from the shop, but from one of his latest victims. At the last minute, the man lifted his head to reveal his true identity, but the posse was too late to act. Felipe Espinosa slipped away again.

The posse chased on, but eventually gave up. When it was dark, they returned to where they had killed Jose Vivian, to examine the body and the brother's belongings. They found Espinosa's diary, reported as reading the ramblings of a madman, full of descriptions of the murders and mutilations, politically charged ramblings, documented conversations with family and friends (that some believe are imaginary), and supporting it all, strong religious righteousness.

After the shootout and death of Jose Vivian Espinosa, it was a quiet summer in Colorado. Some thought Espinosa returned to Mexico, while others reported that he was hiding out with family.

However, the peace did not last. By October 8th, 1863, Espinosa had recruited a nephew (some reports suggest instead, an uncle), and had once again taken up his crusade. They attacked a wagon carrying a Mexican woman and white man. When they attacked, the victims scattered in different directions. Both of the Espinosas gave chase to the man, but soon lost him and went back for the woman.

Meanwhile the woman, Delores Sanchez, had been picked up and was hidden in another wagon driven by two Mexicans. The drivers of the wagon were questioned by Espinosa, and they denied seeing her. However, for reasons unknown Delores gave herself up, and was raped. She was then bound and the Espinosas went to hunt for her companion.

However, her companion had made it to the safety of Fort Garland, and a patrol was immediately dispatched. Delores, who had again freed herself, was found and brought into safety. The best description that anyone had ever given of Felipe was provided, and the Colonel in charge knew just who to charge with ending Espinosa's reign of terror.

Thomas Tate Tobin was a tracker and US Army Scout, who was well known for his excellent abilities. He was summoned to the fort by the Colonel. Tobin started by questioning the two survivors extensively. He then wanted to embark on his mission alone, but the Colonel insisted on sending reinforcements along, thinking Tobin had underestimated Espinosa.

Tobin, along with a small group of soldiers and a boy to look after his horse, travelled for three straight days and nights, stopping only briefly to grab a few hours sleep here and there. Anyone who complained was sent back. He investigated every sign of life or signs of recent visitation he found, and finally early in the morning on day four, he spotted magpies circling. On approach, smoke from a small fire was seen.

Tobin told the men to stay where they were, ready and waiting with their guns drawn. He then crawled over to the camp, his gun out in front of him. There he found Felipe Espinosa and his nephew Jose warming their hands by the fire. Tobin just watched them. Suddenly Espinosa stood up and stretched his arms out wide. Tobin immediately fired, and Espinosa whipped around, holding the large hole that appeared in his side. He is reported to have called out “Jesus favor me!” before collapsing in the fire.

Jose ran, but Tobin quickly reloaded and shot the boy as he was fleeing into the trees. The bullet hit him and he collapsed to the ground. Espinosa was amazingly, still alive, and had pulled himself out of the fire. Tobin emerged from the trees and dragged Espinosa to a nearby fallen log. Using a bowie knife, he beheaded Espinosa. The man responsible for the death of dozens of people had finally met his match.

Conclusion:

When compared to other more famous American murderers like Billy the Kid, the Zodiac Killer and Ted Bundy, Espinosa’s reign far exceeds them in number of victims and brutality.

In one year, Felipe Espinosa killed and mutilated at least thirty-two people. Some reports from the time rate the number upwards of sixty. It could even be said that Felipe Espinosa was America’s first foreign terrorist.

Once Espinosa was dead, the Governor told Tobin that the state did not have the money to pay the promised bounty for the death of Espinosa. Gossip of Tobin only ‘being in it for the money’ arose, but he always swore that he never even knew of the bounty’s existence.

To make up for the loss of the reward, the Governor gifted Tobin a jacket and a new limited edition rifle. After the Civil War, Governor Evans' successor also raised a collection with the help of local donators, and presented it to Tobin. Later in life, Tobin became a rancher and lived well. Despite being hit with a hammer and shot during an argument with his son-in-law (Tobin accused him of abusing his daughter and attempted to stab him) he lived a long life and died in 1904 at the age of 81.

Felipe Espinosa's head became a travelling exhibit, until it disappeared somewhere in the early 1900's. In the 1980's it was revealed that employees at the Colorado Capitol building had found an unknown preserved head in the basement. Before anyone could identify it as Espinosa's, it was incinerated. Various souvenirs from Felipe, along with Jose Vivian and other family members, are on display across Colorado.

As recently as the 1970's, a re-enactment was staged at Fort Garland of Tobin delivering the severed heads of the Espinosa's.

Felipe Espinosa fathered three children, before beginning his murderous rampage, and his descendants are still alive today.

The Bender Family: A Traveler's Nightmare

Killers' Names: John Bender Sr., Mrs. John Bender, John Bender Jr., Kate Bender
Dates Active: 1871 - 1873
Location: The Bender Family Home Between Thayer and Galesburg, Kansas
Victims: Up to twenty-four

Backstory:
The Benders were a family who had arrived as immigrants from Germany, sometime around 1870. They built a home between the towns of Thayer and Galesburg in Kansas, and created it as a stopover and general store along the way between the two towns.

The land they built on had recently been made vacant when the government moved the Osage Indians to a new territory, in what would eventually become Oklahoma. The land was then made available to homesteaders, people that were given ownership of land at little or no cost by the government to populate an area. Five families settled in and around the area, one of which was the Bender family.

The family was headed up by John Bender Sr., who was around sixty years-old and spoke very little English, Mrs. Bender (her first name is unknown) was around fifty-five. She spoke a little English, but was so frightening that she had been nicknamed "she-devil" by their neighbors.

Their children were John Bender Jr., and Kate Bender. John Jr. was around twenty-five, and spoke English fluently, but with a German accent. He often laughed out loud for no perceivable reason, leading neighbors to think that he must have been a "half-wit". Kate Bender was around twenty-three, very attractive, and spoke English flawlessly, with no accent.

Kate Bender also advertised herself as a spiritual healer, and claimed she could see and summon ghosts. Ads placed told of her ability to heal "all

sorts of diseases", including blindness, fits, and deafness.

Circumstances:
The Bender house was a one-room cabin that had been divided into two rooms using an old canvas wagon cover. The smaller room was used as living quarters, and the front was converted into a general store of sorts, and also contained the kitchen and dining area. The Benders provided meals for travelers, and also sometimes invited them to stay the night. There was also a vegetable garden and orchard on the property.

In February 1872, two men were found with their skulls crushed and throats slit. During the winter of 1872, a man named George Newton Longcor disappeared, along with his baby daughter. They had been traveling to resettle in Iowa, but never arrived. His former neighbor, Dr. William Henry York decided to go looking for them, and questioned homesteads he came across along the way. He was known to have reached Fort Scott in Kansas on March 9th, and began his home journey, but never made it back.

Investigation:
York had two brothers, a Colonel living in Fort Scott and the other a member of the Kansas State Senate. Both of his brothers knew his travel plans, and so when York did not return, Colonel York led a company of fifty men and questioned every traveler on the trail, also visiting every homestead.

On March 28th, 1873, Colonel York arrived at the Bender's, and questioned them regarding his brother's disappearance. They suggested that perhaps he had run into trouble with local Indians, which the Colonel thought was possible, and he stayed to have dinner with the Benders before leaving.

Later, on April 3rd, he heard that a woman had fled the home after being threatened by Mrs. Bender with a knife. He returned to the property with armed men, but Mrs. Bender claimed to not understand English. The Bender children denied the woman's entire story, and when Colonel York persisted with his questioning, Mrs. Bender claimed the woman who had

fled was a witch who had cursed them. Kate told him that if he returned she would use her clairvoyant abilities to help locate his brother.

Meanwhile, nearby communities were starting to notice that there were so many disappearances in the region that it was getting a reputation. Travelers were starting to avoid the trail entirely. A meeting at the local schoolhouse was called, and both Colonel York and the Benders attended. By now, York was convinced that the Benders, along with another family, were the guilty parties.

At the meeting, it was agreed that a search warrant would be issued for every homestead in the area. Despite York's suspicions of the Bender family, they were not placed under any surveillance, and it was not until several days later that anyone noticed they had fled the area.

A man driving cattle past the property noticed that there was no one there, and the animals remained unfed. He reported the abandonment, but it was several days more before the weather would permit further investigation. When volunteers were called for, several hundred turned out, including Colonel York. Arriving at the Bender property, all food, clothing and personal possessions were gone. It was then that a bad smell was noticed to be coming from a trapdoor under the bed. The trapdoor had been nailed shut.

Upon opening, the trapdoor revealed a hidden room beneath. It was over six feet deep and seven feet square at the top, and three feet square at the bottom, and old clotted blood was found covering the floor. The volunteers broke up the stone floor with sledgehammers, but no bodies were found in the makeshift basement. They then moved the entire cabin to dig beneath it, but again nothing was found.

Determined that there must be something to explain the blood, they began to probe the garden and area around the cabin with a metal rod. The first body was found in the orchard that evening. It was that of the missing Dr. York, buried with his feet only barely below the surface. When the Bender's property was dug up, investigators ended up finding and exhuming at least

ten bodies, some sources report over twenty-four, including one that held a child and adult entombed together. The child had been buried alive, crushed by the weight of her father's corpse.

Various newspapers reported that the bodies of the victims had been 'indecently mutilated', and all had their heads smashed in with a hammer, with the one notable exception of the child buried with her father. Sources report that the locals were so infuriated with the grisly find that a man named Brockman, who was said to be friends with the Bender family, was strung up from a beam in the Bender house until he was made unconscious, then he was revived and questioned as to what he had known, then hung again.

This was repeated three times until he was finally let go and he staggered home "as one who was drunken". A bible was found inside the house that included phrases suggesting an alias for John Bender Jr. and other mentions of slaughter and hell.

Detectives found tracks belonging to the Bender's wagons and gave chase, but found the wagon abandoned just outside the city limits, about twelve miles north of their home. They were able to discover that the family had bought tickets to the railway, heading for Humboldt, Kansas. John Jr. and Kate had then left the train early, and caught another towards Texas, and from there had travelled into an outlaw colony between Texas and New Mexico. Lawmen that entered that region often did not return, and so they were not pursued further.

It's thought that John Sr. and Mrs. Bender continued on to Kansas City, and then Missouri. From there, what happened to them is unclear. Some say they were caught by gangs out for vigilante justice and were burned alive, others claim they were hanged, and another group claimed to have shot them and buried them on the prairie. The savagery of the story swept through the young nation, adding another threat to the already existing tales of Indians and highwaymen for anyone thinking of settling in the west.

As the story was told, Kate Bender was very beautiful, and had enough charisma to encourage visitors to the home to reveal their financial status. She would then offer guests the seat of honor, positioned directly over the trap door, and right in front of the canvas curtain. Behind the curtain lurked John Bender Sr., armed with a sledgehammer.

Once attacked with the hammer, the victim's throat was slit, and the body was then dropped into the basement through the trapdoor. There, the body would be searched, valuables removed, and they would then be buried in the orchard. Although some guests had been wealthy, it is questionable how much they would have been carrying on their person when traveling. Did the Benders therefore kill for money or merely for the thrill of it?

People who had survived their visit corroborated the story, some stating that they refused to sit where instructed because of the suspect stains upon the canvas cover, or fleeing the property when threatened with a knife. Others became nervous when seeing the Bender men concealing large hammers, and some had been threatened by Kate when they said they preferred to eat their meal at the shop counter instead.

When the house was examined, more than twelve bullet holes were found in the roof and walls. One has to wonder therefore if some of the victims had fought back.

Meanwhile, the Bender house was taken apart by people wanting a souvenir, even taking wood, nails, and anything you could sell for a profit. Eventually, the house was razed and only a large hole remained where the house once stood.

While the Benders were believed to be immigrants from Germany, in fact it seems that only the Bender men were born overseas. Not only that, but it's not sure they even really were a family. There is no documentation to prove their relationship to each other, and it was rumored that their "children" were actually common law husband and wife, rather than siblings.

Dr. York's senator brother offered a $1000 reward for the Bender's arrest, and in May of 1873 the Kansas Governor also offered a $2,000 reward for their arrest. No one has ever claimed either reward.

Conclusion:
The Benders had split and scattered. There were no official sightings and none were ever caught. One man thought he had found John Bender Sr. in Utah, where a man had been killed by a hammer blow to the head. The man severed his own foot to escape leg irons, and bled to death before identification could be made. His skull was removed and was put on display as the skull of a notorious criminal in a local saloon.

In late 1889, a Mrs. Almira Monroe (also known as Almira Griffith) and a Mrs. Sarah Eliza Davis were arrested on charges of larceny in Michigan. They were found not guilty and released, but then immediately re-arrested and accused of being Mrs. and Kate Bender. A Mrs. McCann, the daughter of one of their victims, had reported them. Two other witnesses later identified them from a tintype photograph. They were arrested by the Deputy Sherriff from Osage, the man who had originally led the search of the Bender property.

Mrs. Davis then declared that Monroe was indeed Mrs. Bender, but that she was not Kate, rather a sister of Kate's named Sarah. She signed an affidavit stating that. Meanwhile, Monroe was asserting the exact opposite, that she was not Mrs. Bender but that Davis was indeed Kate. They were both escorted to Kansas, where seven out of a thirteen-member panel confirmed the identity of both, and they were committed to trial.

At this trial, another of Monroe's daughters provided an affidavit that claimed her mother was actually serving two years in Detroit for a manslaughter charge, and was still incarcerated under the name Almira Marks. Monroe originally denied any knowledge of the name or the charge, but when the trial was held over until May 1890, she admitted she had married a Mr. Shearer in 1872, but had not wanted the court to know about her previous name, nor that she had been convicted of manslaughter.

Affidavits were produced claiming that Mrs. Davis had been married in Michigan in 1872, when several of the murders had been committed at the Bender property.

The judge dismissed the other daughter's affidavit (name unknown) as she was viewed as "a chip off the old block", but he found the others were sufficient proof that the women could never be found guilty, and they were both released. The papers have since been lost, and cannot be re-examined. Controversy remains today as to whether the women really were the Benders, or if there was another reason that the courts were reluctant to convict them.

As with many areas where great violence occurred, ghost stories are told about the old Bender property. Victims are said to wander where the house once stood, and their shrieks can be heard in the night. Some say that Kate's ghost also returned to her old hunting grounds, and her spirit is there still.

The Servant Girl Murders: Terror in Texas

Case Name: The Servant Girl Murders
Dates Active : 1884 - 1885
Location: Austin, Texas
Victims: Seven murdered, eight attacked and injured
Suspects: Multiple

Backstory:
The years 1884 and 1885 were a dangerous time to be a servant in Austin, Texas. Servants already had an incredibly difficult life, and now there was something new to worry about.

Over the period of two years, seven females and one male were murdered. Six other women and two other men were also attacked and seriously injured. Not all those who were attacked or killed were servants, one was the boyfriend of one of the victims, one was a child, and the final victims were married white women. Their ages range from 11 years old to late 30s.

The first victim was murdered on the night of December 30th, 1884, and the last nearly a year later on December 24th, 1885.

Were it not for being a victim of the servant girl killer, most of the victims would have lived out their lives in relative anonymity. The combination of lack of proper records at this time, and the fact that the victims were mostly black and female, has led to little information being recorded about each, beyond what happened to end their lives. In nineteenth century Texas, society was heavily weighted in favor of wealthy white males.

In order of attack, the victims were:

- Mollie Smith (killed) and Walter Spencer (injured)
- Clara Strand and Christine Martenson (both injured)
- Eliza Shelley (killed)
- Irene Cross (killed)
- Clara Dick (injured)

- Mary Ramey (killed), and her mother Rebecca Ramey (injured)
- Gracie Vance (killed), Orange Washington (died later from wounds), Lucinda Boddy and Patsey Gibson (injured)
- Susan Hancock (killed)
- Eula Phillips (killed) and her husband James Phillips (injured)

Circumstances:
In the months leading up to the first of what would become a litany of murders, a pattern of crime and violence against domestic servants began to emerge. At first it consisted of breaking into quarters, or rocks thrown through windows and shouted threats. As the year went on, the attacker escalated to physical assaults and even attempted rape. Each attack was more and more violent than the last, and by May 1885, a new attack or disturbance was reported nearly every night.

With the frequency and escalation of the attacks, the general public consensus was that the crimes must be the acts of a brutal gang. Surely, the breadth and frequency of the attacks were too much for an individual suspect. As more and more attacks occurred without any suspects or arrests by the police, speculation grew to the point that the imagined perpetrators were almost invincible.

The first victim was Mollie Smith, killed on December 30th, 1884. Her common law partner, Walter Spencer, who she lived with in a room at her employer's house, was seriously injured. Spencer awoke in pain and went for help. The room was coated in blood, and a trail of it led Smith's employer to discover her outside. Also at the scene was an axe, covered in blood.

Suspicion quickly fell on William Brooks, a man Smith had previously been involved with. Although there was no DNA or blood splatter evidence in 1884, the brutality of the crime was obvious, and investigators believed it supported the theory that the assailant acted in jealousy.

Smith was born in Virginia in 1857, and by the 1870's was living in Texas. She was a domestic servant and like many young women employed as domestic servants, Smith changed employment relatively often, moving between Waco and Austin several times during the 1880's.

One important detail that was left out of any newspaper reports at the time was that Smith was a mother. She had a ten year-old son named George. We don't know if he was removed from his mother's care at the time of her murder, or whether his existence was simply overlooked by reporters. We also do not know what happened to him after her death.

There are rumors that suggest George may have been the son of Robert Rogers, the son of one of Smith's previous employers. At the time of her employment in the Rogers' household, Robert and Mollie were the same age. It has been reported that George was living with the Rogers' family at the time of his mother's death, and Smith was listed as single, rather than divorced or widowed, in the 1880 census. Because of his common name (George Smith), it is impossible to say with any certainty what became of George as he grew. However, it's interesting to note that this was the only murder committed by the servant girl murderer where the child was not with his mother when they met their end.

The next victims of the killer were Clara Strand and Christine Martenson. They were fortunately not killed, but instead seriously wounded. The girls were both Swedish and also servants, and were attacked on March 19th, 1885. Little is recorded about the girls beyond the fact they survived the attack.

However, Austin didn't have to wait long for the attacker to strike again. On the night of May 6th, Eliza Shelley became his next victim. Shelley was also a black servant. Her body was found battered and beaten.

Shelley is listed in the US Census as being born in Texas in 1857, and the mother of two children. At the time of her death, newspapers reported that she had three children. The man who researchers think was most likely her

husband, Ike Shelley, was incarcerated from 1879 to November 1885, just months after his wife's death.

Shelley was a cook for the Johnson family, and lived with her children in a cabin behind the main house on the family's property. Mrs. Johnson heard screams coming from the cabin, and sent her niece to check on the children. What she found was a gruesome sight. When Shelley's body was examined, multiple wounds to the head were found; punctures from a sharp instrument, and a deep gash consistent with an axe wound. The cut in the gash was so deep that the weapon had gone through to Shelley's brain, and the investigator noted that it had almost cleaved her entire skull in two.

This time, the murder weapon was missing, but the blood evidence suggested she had been hit while in bed, and then dragged to the floor. The position of the body and clothing also indicated sexual assault and bloody footprints were found at the scene.

On May 23rd, another black servant named Irene Cross was attacked. Cross was born around 1847 in Mississippi. In 1870 it was reported that she was living in Austin with her husband and nine year-old son. By 1880, Cross was widowed and lived with her son and a nephew, who was still in her care in 1885. In fact, he was present when she was attacked, and described the killer as a "big, chunky, negro man, barefooted and with his pants rolled up."

Unlike the previous victims, she was discovered while still alive, albeit grievously injured. She had a deep cut in her scalp, and her entire arm had just about been severed. Unfortunately, she could not be saved and soon bled to death.

The newspapers of the 1880's were just as sensationalistic as today, and they quickly reported that other murders similar to that of Mollie Smith's had occurred. For the first time, police and the public started to wonder whether it was possible that these attacks were all committed by the same person. Public and media pressure began to mount. Indeed, it was the media

that would create the name given to the killer, The Servant Girl Annihilator.

No one was arrested for Cross's murder, but public speculation had taken hold. However, over time as no one else was attacked or murdered, the commotion died down. Unfortunately, it was not to be quiet for long.

In late August 1885, just one block south from where Shelley's body had been found, the body of Mary Ramey was discovered. She was just eleven years old. Her mother, Rebecca Ramey was a servant in the employ of Valentine Weed. Born in 1875, Mary had never known her father who had died before her birth. She grew up with her mother, older siblings, grandmother and uncle. Her uncle was one of the first black business owners in Austin. By the mid 1880's, her uncle had moved his business a few blocks north, and Rebecca Ramey had found work as a domestic servant. She and Mary lived at her employers' property together.

That night, Rebecca Ramey was also attacked, but survived. Mary Ramey had been dragged outside, raped and then stabbed through both ears with an iron rod. Just like the other attacks, Ramey had been initially knocked unconscious inside the cottage, and then dragged outside.

Things were quiet again until September 26th, when the noise from another attack split the night. Lucinda Boddy, who worked as a cook at a university nearby, was visiting her friend Gracie Vance, who worked as a servant for a local attorney. Boddy had been feeling ill, and so was going to stay with Vance and her common law husband, Orange Washington. Another visitor, Patsey Gibson was also present. Washington was employed as a builder, and he rented the cabin where he lived with Vance.

Vance was the first attacked, screaming when she was grabbed while in bed. Washington responded, but was hit with an axe and knocked down. Boddy was then also hit on the head, fracturing her skull. She was then raped, but blacked out. Gibson was also hit, but there is confusion as to whether it was with the axe or another implement. Vance was then removed from the cabin, and assaulted outside before being killed with a hit to the head from a brick.

Public response was now reignited, and stronger than before. After the Vance murder, vigilante groups began to form, and further criticisms were heaped on the police. In response, a team of detectives from Houston arrived to assist, as well as private detectives.

While public concern continued to grow, some residents placated themselves that at least the killer was only interested in black women, and only black men had ever been arrested. But once again, the killer was about to surprise them.

On Christmas Eve, 1885, Moses and Susan Hancock had been to a concert at the State Institution for the Blind, and had then returned home. Moses had been dozing in a chair, and reported waking up and discovering his wife's body in the backyard. She too, had been pulled from bed and bludgeoned with an axe, before being raped and a sharp tool stuck into her brain. Susan Hancock was white. She never regained consciousness, and died soon after.

The bloodhounds soon arrived with the new marshal, the old one losing his post due to lack of confidence from the public. The new marshal was determined to solve the crimes, but be would be challenged again before the evening was done.

That same hour, another white woman, Eula Phillips, was also attacked and killed. Her body was found in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods of Austin, which many had viewed as protected and safe from such atrocities. Her body was found naked and positioned with legs and arms spread, her arms pinned under pieces of lumber. Her husband had also been attacked, but their infant son was unharmed. In the bedroom, investigators found an axe and a trail of blood leading to the alley where Phillips was found.

Now that the killer had moved to white women, the whole city was afraid. Five hundred people attended a public meeting on Christmas Day, and more police were hired and placed on patrol. They were also instructed to

investigate any strangers in town. Bars and saloons, previously open 24 hours a day, were forced to close at midnight.

But, as strangely as they begun, the attacks stopped. There would be no more murders by the Servant Girl Annihilator after the attacks on Christmas Eve.

Investigation:
The son of Shelley, the second victim, reported that an unknown man had entered the cabin somewhere in the middle of the night. As he awoke he was shoved in a corner and covered with a blanket by the man, who told him to be quiet. It's possible that he was treated with chloroform (a nearby theft of the substance had recently been reported) as he fell asleep and did not recall anything further.

In the case of Lucinda Boddy, her employer overheard the screams, once Boddy and Washington became conscious again. He entered the cabin, and found Boddy fighting with a man she identified as the killer. Just after, she passed out and the man fled the scene. Her employer investigated the grounds, and found Vance's body. In her hand was a gold watch that did not belong to her, and a horse was found prepared to ride. However, further investigations revealed nothing.

The crime scenes were all the same, an axe coated in blood was usually left behind, and often footprints were found. All victims were initially attacked in their beds while asleep. Five of the seven female victims were then dragged outside while unconscious and killed outdoors. Three of the female victims were also sexually mutilated. The victims were all initially struck with an axe, before being carried out into the yard. All of the victims were posed in a similar fashion, and six of the female victims had something sharp inserted into their ears.

The footprints left behind were often spattered with blood, and were deep enough to indicate that the killer had carried his victims. Apart from general measurements of size, technology to identify a perpetrator based on these prints did not exist in the 1880's. There was one feature though, one that

was held back from any reports made to the press and the public. The footprints at each of the crime scenes had only four toes on the right foot.

According to news reports, over 400 men were arrested over the following year. Others believed that so many murders couldn't possibly be the work of only one man. Despite the use of bloodhounds to track suspects, and many accusations from the public leading to the arrest of several suspects, police were unable to make anything stick.

An eyewitness report claimed that the killer was really white, and was wearing a blackening material on his face to disguise himself as a black man.

Suspects:
Originally, a man named William 'Lem' Brooks was arrested for the murder of Mollie Smith. He had a plausible alibi, but it still left time to commit the attacks. An inquest was held, and the jury, comprising of six white men, despite Brooks' alibi, decided he was the guilty party. However, he was soon freed because of lack of any real evidence linking him to the crime. The appearance of another victim soon removed suspicion from him altogether.

With each murder, the police primarily used bloodhounds to track any killers, but nothing was found. After Shelley's murder, police were quick to arrest an unnamed nineteen-year old man who was found wearing no shoes. He was considered "dull witted" enough not to protest, but a comparison of his feet to the tracks left behind soon made it clear he had not committed the crimes. Another black man, who had recently argued with the victim, was also arrested, but released when Irene Cross was attacked.

Just as in the previous murders, bloodhounds were used as the primary tracking method in the Ramey attack. At Cross's crime scene, they arrived on scene sooner than the police. Again, a black man found nearby was arrested, but he too was released by the next morning.

After the Vance murder, two black men were arrested, Dock Woods and Oliver Townsend. Boddy implicated the first, and he also had a bloody shirt in his possession, while Townsend had been overheard threatening to kill Vance. Despite multiple, and probably illegal, attempts to extract confessions from the men, both were released.

In the case of the murders of Hancock and Phillips, both of their husbands were arrested and charged with their murders, police theorizing that they had killed their wives in an imitation of the Servant Annihilator's killings. Reporters were skeptical, and members of the public pointed out how unlikely it was that two separate men both decided at the same time to kill their wives and stage the crime scenes the same, but the trials still went forward.

During the period the crimes were originally committed, the police force was at a loss for any hard evidence of a suspect. Eventually, due to mounting public outcry, changes were made in the hopes of capturing the killer.

By the time of the last murder, the city's police force was three times larger, and the city was under a curfew. As well as the extra police on the beat, private citizens had organized patrols to guard their neighborhoods. People that were unknown or new to the area were forced to identify themselves or be removed from Austin. Businesses such as saloons that were often open 24 hours were instead forced to close at midnight. All this, and yet the crimes remain unsolved.

Trials:
From hundreds of arrests, only one person was ever convicted, and that conviction was subsequently overturned.

Both Hancock's and Phillip's husbands were both arrested for their wives' murders. Jimmy Phillips was himself severely injured in the attack, but he was a known alcoholic and considered a good suspect. Meanwhile, a letter found at Hancock's house indicated that Susan was perhaps thinking of

leaving her husband for that same reason. It was unknown however whether Moses Hancock knew of the letter's existence.

In the end, Hancock's trial resulted in a hung jury. Phillips' trial was more gossip worthy. Eula Phillips was accused of prostituting herself, thus raising her husband's ire, the theory being that she had been killed in retaliation. There were rumors that she had been unfaithful, perhaps even taking up with a politician. Phillips had in the past threatened his wife with a knife, and thrown things at her. A bloodhound at the scene of the murder had indicated that he could detect Phillips at the scene where his wife was dumped. However, the footprints did not match.

It was raised at trial that although Phillips' feet were smaller, perhaps the footprints had spread with the weight of his wife. Phillips then picked up his own lawyer to prove the point in the courtroom. His footprints remained the same size. His father hired the best team they could find, and most of the evidence thrown at them was disputed or deflected.

Despite this, Phillips' was convicted in just one day to the second-degree murder of Eula Phillips, and he was sentenced to seven years in jail. However, before the year was out, the Texas Court of Appeals overturned the verdict. He was not retried and Phillips lived out his life as a free man.

Current Status of the Case:
The identity of the killer or killers still remains officially unknown.

One night in February 1886, a saloon in Masontown in East Austin played host to a disturbing crime. In a drunken rage, a man had cornered a young girl. She cried out for help, but witnesses did not intervene for fear of the attacker himself.

The girl was dragged into a nearby house, and when her screams continued, the police were called. When police officer John Bracken arrived, he and two other men entered the house and tried to pull the man off the girl, only to be met with a knife. They fought, but the man had the upper hand, and all

three men were knocked to the ground. As officer Bracken tried to regain his footing, he heard a gunshot. He shot back, bringing down the attacker.

Later identified as Nathan Elgin, police could find no reason or explanation for his attack on the young girl. It took until the following day for Elgin to die from the gunshot, and when he did a strange detail was noticed at autopsy. Elgin's right foot only had four toes.

So, what did the police do with this find? Incredibly, nothing. What if he was not the attacker the whole city was looking for? If they were to announce that the assassin was dead surely the city would wind back the recently instigated protections. What if they were wrong? After all, the last murders had only happened a little more than a month ago at the time of this attack, and there had been longer gaps between the killings before that. We will never know if Elgin was the perpetrator after all.

Conclusion:
This case did not draw the kind of notoriety that a series of murders like this normally would. It's believed that it wasn't as broadly known because within three years Jack the Ripper became active. There are several investigators that believe the Servant Girl Annihilator was Jack the Ripper. When investigating the Whitechapel murders, authorities from London interviewed several "American cowboys". It has been suggested that one of the men interviewed was Buck Taylor. Taylor was a performer in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. He was born in Fredericksburg, Texas, only seventy miles away from Austin.

Today, you can take an hour and a half tour through the Austin, to where the bodies were found. Ghost stories are also rife. None of the victim's houses still stand, but the legacy of the murders will continue for some time yet as a part of Austin's history.

During research two additional interesting sources of information were found on these murders. An informative article was written in *Texas Monthly* in the July 2000 edition which is available online at

www.texasmonthly.com/archives. Also, an episode of *History Detectives*, a PBS series, covers the murders in detail.

H. H. Holmes: Born Evil

Killer's Name: H. H. Holmes
Dates Active: 1884 - 1894
Locations: Chicago, Illinois and various other locations around the United States
Victims: More than one hundred

Backstory:
H. H. Holmes is best known as the first American serial killer, though there are those who dispute his claim to the title. Born on May 16th, 1861 as Herman Webster Mudgett, he was the son of Levi Horton Mudgett and Theodate Page Price. Both his parents were descendants of the first European settlers in New Hampshire. From a farming family, they were both very religious and devout Methodists. There are claims however, that behind closed doors, Holmes' father was an alcoholic who could become violent.

When Holmes was a child, he had his first brush with death. After discovering that he was afraid of the local doctor, it's claimed that classmates forced Holmes to touch a human skeleton. Rather than being scared, as the bullies hoped, Holmes instead was fascinated, and shortly after that became obsessed with death. Some accounts also list that Holmes was unusually intelligent as a child, and 'practiced' surgery on animals, a clear sign to people today of what lay ahead.

Holmes grew up, and on July 4th, 1878, he married Clara Lovering. The couple had a son, Robert, born on February 3rd, 1880. Soon after, in 1884, Holmes graduated from medical school at the University of Michigan. He then moved to Chicago to start a career in pharmaceuticals. This is when he first started to use the alias H. H. Holmes.

While he was still in medical school, Holmes had his first taste of committing fraud. He stole bodies from the lab, and after disfiguring the remains to mimic accidental deaths, claimed on insurance policies that he

took out on the deceased person. When he moved to Chicago, the dodgy deals continued, with rumors that Holmes was involved in scams involving real estate and promotional deals.

Holmes was still married to Clara, when on January 28th,1887, he also married Myrta Belknap in Minnesota. He did eventually file for divorce from Clara a few weeks after the second marriage, but it was never finalized. Holmes and Myrta had a child together in 1889, and though he lived with his second wife and daughter, Holmes spent much of his time in Bakersfield, California on business.

It seems that Holmes had a wandering eye, because while still legally married to both Clara and Myrta, he once again married, this time to Georgiana Yoke on January 8th, 1894 in Denver, Colorado. He also had a relationship on the side with the wife of a former employee, Julia Smythe. Unfortunately for Julia however, her story with Holmes was not yet complete.

In 1886, when Holmes first arrived in Chicago, he started work at a drugstore belonging to Dr. Elizabeth S. Holton. When Holton's husband died, Holmes offered to buy the store from her, and she accepted. Some say that instead she was forced out, or mysteriously disappeared.

Holmes purchased the store with funds he obtained by mortgaging the store's fixtures and stock, with high monthly loan repayments equal to over $2,500 in today's money. He also purchased an empty lot across the road from the drugstore, and built a three story "murder castle".

The building was a full block long, and opened in 1893 as a hotel for the Chicago World's Fair. The ground floor contained the relocated drugstore, and other shops. The two upper floors contained Holmes' personal office, and over one hundred windowless rooms. These rooms had doorways that opened to nowhere, hallways at odd angels, stairs that led nowhere, doors that only opened from the outside, and was a complete maze. Multiple builders were used on the project, and so only Holmes knew the complete design and layout of the building.

It was during this time that Holmes first met Benjamin Pitezel. Pitezel was a carpenter who had a history of breaking the law, and he was to become further involved with Holmes over time. The two men lived together at one time, and Holmes also bailed Pitezel out of jail for passing a bad check. It's not known for sure whether they worked together as partners in fraud, but it's highly likely.

Holmes used the hotel to find his victims. At first they were employees, most of whom had life insurance policies with Holmes as the benefactor, then lovers and hotel guests were also taken and killed. Some he locked in sound-proof rooms in the maze. The rooms were fitted with gas lines that allowed him to kill them any time he wished. He could view hotel guests being gassed and dying in their rooms. Others were left to suffocate in a large bank vault near his personal office. The bodies were then sent to the basement via a secret chute, where they were dissected and removed of their flesh. Their bones were turned into skeleton models, and sold to various medical schools. Some were also cremated or placed in lime pits to decompose. The extent of Holmes' depravity however, would not be revealed for years to come.

Circumstances:
After the World Fair closed, and the economy began to slump, Holmes found himself in financial stress. His whole life, his ventures were often financed by borrowing from one to pay another, or selling off a rented asset to pay a bill, and the walls were closing in on his castle of murder. Along the way in Chicago, he had also been involved in a number of smaller schemes and frauds, including selling a cure for alcoholism, opening a restaurant and then selling it before the outfitting company could repossess anything, and passing worthless personal checks. In each instance, he seemed to be able to use fast-talking and quick thinking to put people off or avoid charges.

The entire time he lived in Chicago, Holmes continued to maintain a house with his wife in Wilmette, Illinois. At various times, multiple people including his mother-in-law and people that did not exist, were listed as the

owners of the castle. People spoke of a jealous wife who lived at the castle with Holmes, but rather than being one of his several wives, this was likely Julia Smythe, the wife of Holmes' ex-employee. She is widely believed to the Holmes' first victim in his castle.

Many believe she was murdered because yet another young lady had caught Holmes' eye. Her name was Minnie Williams, and soon after Smythe's death, Williams moved into the Chicago house. However, she too would eventually meet her end at the house. Some say that she was also Holmes' accomplice for a time, but she was almost definitely at least his victim.

Perhaps feeling the pressure from all directions, somewhere during this time Holmes left Chicago and moved to Fort Worth, Texas. Here, he inherited property from two sisters who were railroad heiresses. He had promised to marry one of them, but had instead murdered them both. At first, he wanted to build another property like his Chicago castle there, but he soon abandoned the plan. Instead, he went on the road again, and traveled throughout both the USA and Canada.

At this point in Holmes' history, his focus changed. He became less involved in small frauds or petty operations. Now, he was making a living from mass murder. Needing the money at one point, he tried, unsuccessfully, to claim on an insurance policy against his castle. This brought him the attentions of Inspector F. G. Cowie.

Holmes' creditors were also starting to make life difficult for him. Previously he had been able to put them off with his smooth talking, but now court dates were being set and there was talk of warrants being issued for his arrest. Holmes fled Chicago, and was next seen in Denver, Colorado. It is here that he married Georgiana Yoke, his third wife. Holmes didn't know it then, but the end was nigh.

Investigation:
In 1894, a man named Marion Hedgepath (who also went by the alias Hedspeth), a notorious train robber, approached police offering to disclose a plot to defraud a Chicago life insurance company. It turned out that a

cellmate of the man, H. M. Howard, had offered Hedgepath $500 if he could recommend an attorney that would go along with the scheme. They planned to fake the death of a man, using a stand-in body, and then collect the insurance money. Hedgepath suspected that the true crime was really murder. The man had run off without paying Hedgepath, and so he was informing on him as payback. After some investigation, the company and the police realized that H. M. Howard was actually H. H. Holmes, a man already known to be a fraudster from the investigations into his hotel business.

On September 4th, 1894, a caller to a house on Callowhill Street, Philadelphia called police after there was no answer at the door. Police forced their way inside and they found the body of a man who seemed to have been the victim of an explosion. The body was severely burned, and flammable liquid and matches were found near the body. He was identified as the tenant, B. F. Perry, and a coroner's jury found the man had died of burns. After his body remained unclaimed for ten days, he was buried in Potters Field.

A few days afterwards, a letter was received by the Fidelity Mutual Life Association of Philadelphia, claiming that B. F. Perry was actually Benjamin Pitezel, and his life was insured by the company. His wife, apparently too ill to travel herself, sent their friend Dr. H. H. Holmes and attorney Jeptha Howe, along with the couple's fourteen year old daughter, to aid in the identification of the body. Both Holmes and Pitezel's daughter identified the body as Pitezel, though it was noted that his daughter was fearful, and the insurance policy was paid. Was it not for Hedgepath that would likely have been the end of the matter.

It was not until Hedgepath's information that doubt was thrown on the whole situation, and the death was more fully investigated. Howard had since disappeared, and Hedgepath suspected that he had actually murdered Pitezel in the beginning, after his apparent refusal to allow Mrs. Pitezel to come along to identify the body. Perhaps he knew that she would have known it was really her husband all along, and not a replacement corpse as had been originally planned.

When Holmes had vanished, he'd taken three of Pitezel's children with him, and so after the insurance company tried unsuccessfully to track him, they hired the Pinkerton National Detective Agency to get on the case. As the investigation got underway, his other crimes and schemes in Chicago came to light, and investigators began to realize that they were dealing with perhaps one of the largest perpetrators of fraud they had ever seen. Little did they realize what else he had been getting up to in Chicago.

Holmes was apprehended in Boston on November 16th, 1894. He had been preparing to leave the country by steamship. The detectives told him at the time that he was being arrested for horse theft in Texas, and he left with the detectives with little fuss. The charge was small, and he likely secretly thought he could talk his way out of this situation, just as he had all the others.

At first, the story that he told detectives was relatively run of the mill, and contained many lies likely designed to cover up his previous crimes. Once in jail, Holmes then offered up an amazing confession. It was printed in the papers at the time and immediately caused a sensation. These recounts are what many of the reports of Holmes' crimes are based on, but as they are interlaced with so many lies and embellishments, plus many times there was only Holmes as the sole witness, it is not truly known what is real and which are more fantastical stories.

Holmes told the insurance company that the body he had identified as Benjamin Pitezel was really a corpse that he had substituted in an attempt to claim the insurance money. When asked to account for what happened to Pitezel's children, he told the agent that they had been left with their father, who had fled either for South America or Florida.

The agent was very nearly convinced, but Carrie Pitezel, Benjamin's wife, could not corroborate any of the story, except for the original plan to defraud, and had no idea where her husband or missing children were. She told investigators that Holmes had been continually moving her around, making promises that she would be reunited with her family soon. She was

charged with conspiracy, though investigators believed she had barely understood what was really going on. Those in charge now believed Pitezel had been dead all along.

Because of the location of the original crime, Holmes was then escorted back to Philadelphia. On the way, Holmes bragged about his crimes to the detective, and even claimed he had the ability to hypnotize people into doing whatever he wanted. When this was told to reporters, Holmes was described in the media as having almost supernatural powers.

Holmes was eventually jailed in Moyamensing Prison, where he remained for several months. While there, he was reported to have been well behaved, and actually earned the favor of several guards. They would bring him the daily papers, and he would catch up each day on the investigation into his own crimes. Reading what police were discovering about him, he must have realized he needed a more convincing story.

Holmes then admitted that it really had been Pitezel in the explosion all along, but rather than Holmes having killed him, he simply discovered him dead, killed by his own hand in a suicide. Holmes had then burnt the supposed suicide note, and staged the scene to look like the accident they had planned together all along. That stayed his story for several more months, though during all this time, no one heard any more from Pitezel's missing children.

On July 3rd, 1895, he went to trial for conspiracy to defraud the insurance company, and he pled guilty on advice from his attorneys, as the sentence would be light. Sentencing ended up being delayed, but by now everyone wanted to know what had happened to Pitezel's children. Detective Frank Geyer was assigned the case, and didn't know whether he would end up finding the children, or only their remains.

For his own part, Holmes reported that he had left the children with a guardian, having one of the girls pretend to be a boy. He was shocked that someone would accuse him of killing children, and appeared genuinely distressed that something terrible may have happened to them. He

continued to keep up with the investigation in the papers each day, and Geyer started to notice that Homes' actions and stories changed along with what was reported. Holmes then reported that the children were in the care of Minnie Williams, the young girl who had caught his eye back at his castle, but no one had seen her or her sister in some time either.

Despite being told by Holmes that Minnie had taken the children to England, something told Geyer that the answers he was seeking were much closer to home. Armed with letters the children had written their mother that Holmes had never posted, he left in the direction of the Midwest, taking some personal belongings of the children with him. No one expected the investigation to lead to much, but as the insurance company no longer had to pay out Pitezel's policy, they had agreed to foot the bill for the trip.

It was while in Cincinnati that he found someone who recognized the small group, traveling as Alex E. Cook. The name matched one Holmes had used in previous dealings. The clerk who recognized Holmes sent Geyer in the next direction, and through much investigation and questioning, he discovered a woman who claimed she had seen Holmes take delivery of a large stove, which he had since gifted to the woman when he realized she had seen him have it delivered.

From there, he went to Indianapolis, which was the next destination mentioned in the letters. It was here that Geyer found that Holmes had been moving his wife (one of three still married to him) and the children around in the city, independent of each other. Neither had been aware the others were so close.

From there, Geyer followed the trail to Chicago, and then to Detroit. This is where the last letter had been written to Mrs. Pitezel by the children. Here, he discovered that Holmes had actually had Mrs. Pitezel and the other two children in the town at the same time, but had kept them separated from their mother and other children. They were only three blocks away from each other, but Holmes had made sure they never met. It was here that Alice Pitezel, now fifteen, had written in a letter to her mother the chilling message regarding her little brother, "Howard is not with us now".

The next stop on Geyer's travels was Toronto, where he asked real estate agents if any of them had dealt with a man who rented a house for only a few days. He found a house, and even discovered loose dirt under the house, but it was a dead end, Geyer finding nothing. He was determined that something had happened in that town, and so when he got word of another suspicious rental, he left immediately to check it out.

Here, he was told that the man who rented the house had children with him, and asked to borrow a spade so he could plant potatoes in the cellar. The only furniture he had was a bed, mattress and a large trunk. When shown a photograph of Holmes, the landlady positively identified him as the man who had rented the house.

Upon digging in a soft spot he found in the cellar, such a stench arose that Geyer knew immediately he had found the final resting place of the Pitezel children. When the area was fully exhumed, the bodies of two girls were found. Objects were found in the house that were identified as personal belongings of the Pitezel girls, which cemented the identification. But where was little Howard? He had been only eight when he disappeared.

Geyer returned to Indianapolis, and used the same strategy to discover short-term rentals. By this time, his investigation had caught the attention of the national media, and he received many leads, unfortunately most of them proved false. All the while, Holmes kept track of the investigation in the papers and tried to throw investigators off the scent. This time however, they could not be swayed, and so Holmes clammed up and refused to offer any kind of assistance.

Geyer ended up traveling to several other places on leads, but instinct told him that he would find the boy in Indianapolis, and so he once again returned. He started traveling to small towns nearby, systematically checking each one. In a town called Irvington, he found what he was looking for. A man there had rented a house back in October, and remembered Holmes because he had been very rude. The rude traveler had

had with him a small boy. There was no disturbed earth in the cellar, but Geyer did discover a trunk in a small alcove.

A coal stove was found in the barn, and remembering Holmes' purchase and then abandonment of another stove, Geyer suspected he had finally found the place he'd been looking for. On the top of the stove he discovered stains that looked like dried blood. Mrs. Pitezel was telegrammed a description of the truck, and she identified it as hers. Finding nothing, Geyer left, but returned shortly.

A doctor had poked around in the stove, and found remains of charred bone. He identified them as part of a skull and femur, both belonging to a small male child. The chimney was then dismantled, and a full set of teeth and pieces of a jaw were further found. A dentist reported that these belonged to a boy who was aged seven to ten years old. Finally, at the bottom of the chimney, a large mass of burnt flesh was found, along with a pelvis. Many people identified Holmes as the man that had been living at the property, and one even reported helping him to install the stove.

It was now August 27th, 1894, two months after he'd started his search, and Geyer was convinced he had now discovered the albeit tragic ending behind the disappearance of all three of Pitezel's missing children.

Holmes was indicted by a grand jury for the murder of Pitezel on September 12th, and a trial was set for October 28th.

Making investigations into Holmes' past, investigators finally visited his hotel in Chicago. As well as the soundproof rooms, and trapdoors in the floors, they found an asbestos lined chamber with indications that something had been burnt inside, among other torture rooms setup so Holmes could watch his victims die.

As well as the ghastly building design, inside investigators discovered several complete skeletons, and many other burnt bone fragments, along with a blood stained noose and the lime vault. Holmes claimed he had nothing to do with any of the killings, and that instead all these people had

either taken their own lives while at his hotel, or been killed by someone else unknown.

Having gotten by on the gift of the gab before, Holmes released his own memoir, entitled *Holmes' Own Story, in which the Alleged Multimurderer and Arch Conspirator Tells of the Twenty-two Tragic Deaths and Disappearances in which he is Said to be Implicated*. The memoir spanned his entire life, and it was here that the stories of his childhood we now know were first revealed.

In the memoir, Holmes admitted to fraud dating back as far as his days in medical school in Michigan. He denied being involved in the disappearance of any of the women he had been associated with over the years, including Minnie Williams, who Holmes said had fallen on difficult times, had an illegitimate child, and was then suicidal. He blamed William's sister's death on Williams herself, saying she had killed her in a jealous rage after the sister was also attracted to Holmes. He recounted that he then broke it off with Minnie and they parted ways, but strangely no one had heard from Minnie or her sister ever again.

He also described his relationship with the Pitezel family, claiming that he had no ill feelings towards Benjamin and had no reason to kill any of them. Pitezel was worth more to him alive than he ever would be dead, and so why would be murder him?

Despite all his efforts, it seemed that the past had finally caught up with him. The public saw his writing to be more self-serving than the truth, and no one really believed his version of events.

Trial:
Despite Holmes' attorney's efforts to have the trial continued, it went ahead on October 28th in Philadelphia, after a struggle between them and Chicago as to who would try him first. The trial lasted only five days.

During the trial, Holmes at first dismissed his legal team and tried to defend himself. This was unprecedented in a murder trial in America, and many

lawyers and students attended to watch. Although his performance was described as “remarkable”, he would often go on forays into minutia, and argued many times with the prosecutor. His first grave mistake came when, shortly after gruesome testimony regarding the condition of Pitezel’s corpse, Holmes asked to go to lunch as he was hungry, apparently unaffected by the grisly details.

It became apparent to Holmes that he was losing ground so he tried to rehire his two attorneys, but by then his case was likely already damaged beyond repair. The only time Holmes was directly involved in the case after that was to cross-examine his third wife. Despite Holmes laying on the emotion, claiming to be devastated by her betrayal, she refused to change her story.

The prosecution called over thirty-five witnesses, and made a solid case. They proved that the chloroform Holmes had claimed Pitezel had used to commit suicide had actually been applied to his body after he was already dead. Carrie Pitezel also testified, and won over the jury and the courtroom with her testimony of finding out her children were also dead, allegedly at Holmes’ hand.

Closing arguments went for over two hours, and in the end Holmes was convicted of the murder of Pitezel, and he was sentenced to death by hanging.

Holmes’ attorneys prepared an appeal for a new trial, but this failed. Holmes then started writing again, this time it seems to become the most notorious killer the world had ever known. He claimed to be born evil, and to have killed more than one hundred people, though perhaps he had second thoughts as he later reduced this number to twenty-seven. He said that he could not help what he had done.

Criminologists of the time studied Holmes, and many found physical traits “proving” his affliction, following the training of the then prominent anthropologist Cesare Lombroso. No doubt Holmes enjoyed all the attention.

He admitted then that his first murder had been of a former schoolmate, to claim the insurance money. He claimed that although he had felt terribly guilty (which was probably another lie) it had given him a taste for blood. He claimed to have continued to kill from then on, providing quite a lot of details in the murders of the Williams sisters and the Pitezel family. How much, if any, is actually true, will never be known.

Conclusion:
Holmes was hanged on May 7th, 1896, after a last meal of boiled eggs, dry toast, and coffee. To his dying breath, he was still changing his story, now claiming he only ever killed two people. He was still trying to say more when the trapdoor opened. His neck did not break, and instead it took him over fifteen minutes to slowly strangle to death.

In the end, Holmes admitted to murdering twenty-seven people, but the true number will never be known. Many suspect that the real count is much, much higher. Many people who rented rooms from Holmes in his castle went missing and were never heard from again after staying there.

At the time of Holmes' crimes and arrest, the term psychopath was still in its infancy, being coined professionally for the first time in the early 1900's. With what we now know, it's likely that Holmes was, if not America's first serial killer, at least definitely a true psychopathic serial killer.

Conclusion

Our modern times are not the only creators of serial killers. Perhaps our ability to make and keep records and communicate information across the world makes it seem that serial killers are a modern phenomenon. In fact, people who crave killing have always existed. Some serial killers are created by childhood experiences and some are born with the predilection for killing. Either way, they walk among us and we will continue to be horrified by their deeds.

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